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CHARLES FOLLEN FOLSOM

BY

JAMES JACKSON PUTNAM

FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, VOL. XLIV.

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DR. CHARLES FOLLEN FOLSOM.

WHEN the news of the death of Dr. Charles Follen Folsom was telegraphed from New York to Boston, on August 20, 1907, a large circle of persons — social acquaintances, patients, and professional colleagues — felt that they had lost the support of a faithful adviser, the companionship of a dear friend.

It is a fortunate asset of the physician's life that he enters into intimate personal relationships with many of the individuals who turn to him for advice, and has an unusual chance to cultivate his powers of sympathy. But there have been few physicians of this neighborhood and generation in whom these fires of personal sympathy have burned so warmly as they did in Dr. Folsom, or who have been able to inspire with reciprocal emotions so many of their patients and their friends. The growth of these attachments was genuine and unforced, for they were based on well-grounded affection and respect.

Dr. Folsom had settled in Boston, with a record of two years' faithful service for the freedmen, but without influential connections and with no instinct for advertisement of himself. He showed, however, marked ability as a practitioner, marked willingness to labor for results worth having, a high standard of thoroughness and obligation, and the highest possible standard of friendship, and it was not long before these qualities made him a real figure among real men and women in our community. Some extracts from a letter to his intimate friend, Rev. William C. Gannett, written about 1881, will recall some of his characteristic traits. He says: ". . . I do not agree with you as to not making friends, even if it does hurt to tear up the roots. Go as deep, say I, into as many human hearts as you can. Never lose a single chance for knowing one person, even, well. In fact, it is the only thing in the world that pays. You do other things because you must, or it is your duty to do so, but that does not pay. You do not get back anything, and the volcano inside of one only rumbles and growls to itself instead of letting its smoke and brimstone out in the world,[1] whereas in knowing people well you get more than you give."

[1] The order of the clauses in this sentence have been slightly changed, for greater clearness.

"Yes, I am going to Munich to study with Pettenkofer and Voit and Wolfhügel. I have the work to do and I want to do it as well and as much of it as I can.

"But I do not care when I stop, whether next year or next week or next century. So long as the machine runs, I want to keep some useful spindles going.

"I suppose I shall say Good-bye, next month, to many I may not see again, but I can't think of the 'gradual forgetting'; that seems hardly possible, and life is too short and too full of disagreeable things to ever forget one pleasant friend."

In another letter in which he discusses with deep feeling the sacrifice he made in relinquishing the practical work of a physician for the secretaryship of the Board of Health, he writes: "I have always been strongly drawn to a life which will be one to bring me in close relations with individuals needing help." And again, in the same letter, "If people will only place their ideals high enough, they may easily or with a fight make them real. . . . You know that I am conscientious from sense of duty, if at all, and not, like you, by instinct, and that duty does not come naturally to me, but only after toil and a fight."

The sentiments indicated by these citations point to Dr. Folsom's general characteristics and his plan of life; and the remarkable depth of feeling on the occasion of his death, shared in by the many persons whom he had befriended with his wise counsel and his generous purse, or who had worked side by side with him and knew his efficiency, his intelligence, his fidelity, and his power of accomplishment, is a sufficient warrant that the plan was carried out.

The feeling expressed by the word "loyalty," which underlies the best instincts of the moral life, was a fundamental feature of his character.

Charles Folsom was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts, April 3, 1842, the fifth of eight children. His father moved to Meadville, Pennsylvania, when Charles was but seven years old, and it was there that his boyhood was mainly spent. The life was simple and uneventful, but his was a case where in the boy could be read in great measure the character of the man. He gained new traits as he grew older, but lost none that were of value. Sweetness and evenness of temper, affectionateness, a strong instinct of helpfulness, untiring industry, skill in the use of brains and hands, — qualities such as these made him universally beloved. "The best boy in school and the foremost in scholarship" was the judgment of his teachers and school-fellows. It is a good test of a boy to be tried as the playmate of his younger sisters, and Charles was held by his an older brother without peer.

Both of his parents were natives of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The major portion of his ancestors on both sides were of the English race, but the progenitors of the American branches came early to New England, the Folsoms [2] settling in Exeter, New Hampshire, and the Penhallows, whose name his mother bore, in Portsmouth. They were all active, respected people, many of them prominent in public life.

Nathaniel Smith Folsom, Dr. Folsom's father, was graduated one of the foremost in a somewhat notable class at Dartmouth College in 1828. He studied for the ministry at the Andover Theological Seminary, but was soon in the ranks of the Unitarians, and after some years of pastoral work in New England was appointed (in 1849) to a professorship in the Theological School at Meadville. He was a fine classical scholar, high-minded and conscientious. From him, as well as from his mother, Charles inherited the instinct for service to his fellowmen that was so prominent in his nature.

Mrs. Folsom was a woman of rare sweetness and evenness of temper, of fine and strong character, with the fidelity to duty and the steadiness of purpose that had been dominant traits in her family for generations.

In 1861 Mr. Folsom resigned the professorship in Meadville, and in 1862 moved to Concord, Massachusetts, where he engaged in teaching. Here the family remained for many years. I recall with pleasure a short visit to them at that place, a cross-country walk with Dr. Folsom, then a medical student, and the impression made upon me by his gentle, quiet manner, his simplicity and his love of nature. But during most of the Concord period he was away from home, at Port Royal, or studying his profession, and before this he was at Exeter Academy and Harvard College, where he was graduated with his class in 1862, the second year of the war.

Dr. Folsom would have enlisted in the army but for the solicitation of his parents. An elder brother was then living in the South and had been drafted into the Confederate ranks, and they could not bear the thought of their two sons meeting upon opposite sides. This brother was heard from once during the war, through a weather-beaten letter which he managed to get smuggled through the lines, and it was afterwards positively ascertained that he had fallen in 1862. Instead of entering the army, Dr. Folsom offered his services to aid in carrying out the newly organized enterprise in behalf of the freedmen at Port Royal, and was sent to the island of St. Helena, where he remained for the next two years. The Port Royal enterprise, so far as the volunteer element in it was concerned, was the outcome of the sense of responsi-

[2] The name of the first settler (1638) was written Foulsham.

bility for the negroes on the part of Northern sympathizers with the movement of abolition. Dr. Folsom's father was an ardent abolitionist and this move on his son's part had his warm encouragement; there is some reason, indeed, to think that he suggested it. The story of the movement is well told in a recent book entitled "Letters from Port Royal," edited by Elizabeth Ware Pearson. Early in the war [3] the Sea Islands region of South Carolina, in the neighborhood of Port Royal and Beaufort, became, all of a sudden, untenable for its Southern occupants in consequence of the capture of two forts by Commodore Dupont, and the great plantations there were at once abandoned by their owners, who fled precipitately, leaving behind them several hundred negroes, incapable of caring for themselves, and a vast amount of cotton nearly ready for exportation. Not only this, but refugee negroes soon came pouring in, so that the number finally reached several thousand. Cotton agents were sent down by the Government to look after the cotton, and Mr. Edward L. Pierce of Milton was placed in charge of the negro problem and of the work of planting next year's crop. Mr. Pierce sought at once the aid of private citizens, at first in Boston, then in New York and Philadelphia. A Freedmen's Aid Society was formed, and very quickly a band of the best people of the North was under way, sufficiently well equipped in money, ability, and ardent devotion to the cause, but destitute of training or experience, to face the problems of "the housekeeper, the teacher, the superintendent of labor, and the landowner," under conditions strange and new. Especially prominent among them was Mr. Edward S. Philbrick of Boston, but the group comprised many other persons of intelligence and devotion, college graduates and women of the best sort. "For the first time in our history educated Northern men had taken charge of the Southern negro, had learned to know his nature, his status, his history, first-hand, in the cabin and the field. And though subsequently other Southern territory was put into the hands of Northern men and women to manage in much the same fashion, it was not in the nature of things that these conditions should ever be exactly reproduced. The question whether or not the freedman would work without the incentive of the lash was settled once for all by the Port Royal Experiment."

It was a difficult task that was set before this company of willing but untried philanthropists, and it was well done. "Keenly as they felt the past suffering and the present helplessness of the freedmen, they had the supreme common-sense to see that these wrongs could not be

[3] L. c. Preface.

righted by any method so simple as that of giving. They saw that what was needed was, not special favor, but even-handed justice. Education, indeed, they would give outright; otherwise they would make the negro as rapidly as possible a part of the economic world, a laborer among other laborers. All that has happened since has only gone to prove how right they were."

It was natural that friendships formed among fellow-workers under conditions such as these should be warm and lasting, and the small group of men and women of which Charles Folsom formed a member during the two years of their common labors in field and cabin on St. Helena Island remained firmly bound through life. Dr. Folsom's nearest friends were William C. Gannett and Miss Mary E. Rice, with whom he afterwards freely corresponded, Edward W. Hooper, and Charles P. Ware. Mr. Gannett in a recent letter writes as follows: "While we were together in Freedmen's work on St. Helena Island, in 1862–1864, he lived for a long time in our home, — Miss Rice's and mine; I remember well, when the malaria caught me, how he used to sit on my sick bed and tell stories until the room rang with our laughter, and how he journeyed ten or twelve miles to Beaufort and back through the sand just to get me a little ice for the fever."

The Port Royal experience was in some respects a disastrous one for Dr. Folsom, since he there received an accidental gun-shot wound in his arm which caused him a great deal of pain, and in addition contracted malaria and a valvular disease of the heart, both of which troubles are believed to have contributed more or less directly to his death. He also began to suffer from severe neuralgic headaches at about this time, due partly to the shot-gun accident,[4] partly, perhaps, to the malaria, and on this account he was advised by his physician, on his return to Boston, in 1865, to make a long voyage by sea. Following this advice he went around the Horn to San Francisco as passenger on a sailing vessel, and came back before the mast, much improved in health though not quite relieved of his headaches, which continued to trouble him during his medical studies and even later. He writes to Miss Rice of his experiences on this voyage: "How amused you would have been to see the calm and stately way in which I wash down decks every morning, broom in one hand, water-bucket in the other, in my bare feet, shirt sleeves rolled up to my elbows, pants rolled up to my knees; or could you but see my dignified roll as I cross the main deck, slinging a tar bucket over one shoulder and the grease pot over the

[4] Some of the shot lodged in the scalp, and many, though perhaps not all of them, were extracted some years later.

other; or the sad amble as I pace the deck in the lonely midnight watch, chanting the 'Gideonite's Lament' or 'Katie's gone to Roxbury.' I am exceedingly glad that I took the trip, and especially that I returned a tarry sailor as I did. It gave me insight into a new phase of life, and I am sure the benefit has been greater than if I had come back a passenger." Mr. Gannett recalls the following incident, important for our purpose: "A sailor fell from aloft, and broke himself all to pieces so hopelessly that they left him in a huddle to die. Folsom [5] could not stand that, went to work with what knowledge he had, patched him together as well as he could, nursed him, and brought him through alive to New York." This was, as Mr. Gannett says, "his first case," and a worthy one.

In 1866 Charles Folsom decided, after some hesitation, to study medicine. A small and favored portion of the would-be medical students of that period used to spend a few months in taking a preliminary course of Comparative Anatomy under Professor Jeffries Wyman. Dr. Folsom and I took this course together, and vividly do I remember our first meeting. I can see myself lingering about, on a summer morning, in the cool hall-way of Boylston Hall, where Professor Wyman's laboratory lay, watching the door swing open and observing the tall figure of Charles Folsom enter. I well recall his boyish yet thoughtful and intelligent expression, his pleasant smile, his light hair and sunburnt face, and his plain suit of homespun gray. We were entire strangers to each other then, but on the moment a bond of mutual sympathy was established and we became good friends. Professor Wyman, that rare man and teacher whom every one admired, loved, and trusted, soon recognized Dr. Folsom's ability and worth, and secured for him, a few years later, the Curatorship of the Natural History Museum, a position which he occupied for several years and abandoned with regret.

Between 1866 and 1869 came medical studies, diversified by half a year's tutoring in Charlestown, New Hampshire, which secured him some pleasant acquaintances and a gain in health, though it was felt as a somewhat rasping interruption to his work.

The old custom of supplementing one's class-room studies by serving as assistant in the private office of an established practitioner (even during the medical course) was still followed, to some extent, at that period, and in this way Dr. Folsom made, in 1868, the highly valued acquaintance of Dr. H. I. Bowditch. In a letter to Mr. Gannett, written in October of that year, he says: "Dr. Bowditch is simply splendid. He is one of the purest-minded men I ever knew, and the op-

[5] Not yet a medical student.

portunities for study are very great." I had the privilege of following Dr. Folsom at this task and can warmly testify to its value. The duty of the assistant was to receive the patients in an anteroom of the delightful study at the house on Boylston Street, make full notes of their histories, which were to be submitted afterwards to close scrutiny, and a preliminary diagnosis. Then came the physical examination by Dr. Bowditch, at which the student was often invited to assist, and the frank comments of one of the best men and best physicians of his day. It was "section teaching" in its best form. Dr. Folsom's admiration for Dr. Bowditch was so great and the understanding between them became so fine, that the friendship then established proved one of the great forces in Dr. Folsom's life. There was some question in the next year (1869) whether he should become assistant at the City Hospital or at the Massachusetts General, for which he first applied. It was to the former that he went, and he found reason to congratulate himself for so doing, largely because it brought him again under Dr. Bowditch. It was not alone admiration for Dr. Bowditch's qualities as a man that drew his younger friend so strongly, but similarity in sentiment and opinion, likewise. Both of them had grown up in the atmosphere of abolitionism, and Dr. Bowditch's ardent advocacy, both of that cause and of the natural right of women to do what nature fitted them to do and especially to practice medicine if they wished, was met with quick and active sympathy on Dr. Folsom's part. In later years his cautious and conservative traits came more prominently forward, but the sentiments by which he was mainly moved were always those of unconventionality and freedom.

He strongly advocated the plan of putting a woman physician on the medical board of Danvers Hospital and took an active part in furthering the admission of women to Johns Hopkins Medical School. In the bibliography which follows this paper a reference will be found to an address of his upon this latter subject.

The service at the City Hospital came to an end in the spring of 1870. As soon as it was over Dr. Folsom opened an office on Leverett Street and engaged in private practice, while at the same time he became physician to the Massachusetts Infant Asylum, then recently established. He was for a short time connected also with the Carney Hospital. At these tasks he remained until the spring of 1872, when he obtained a much desired position as assistant at the McLean Asylum, then in the old familiar grounds at Somerville, and this he kept until the autumn of 1873. He threw himself, indeed, at this period, with great energy into the study of diseases of the mind, and came near to selecting this branch of medicine for his life work. Even as late as

1877 he writes to Mr. Gannett: "The bill has passed the Legislature requiring the Governor to appoint trustees, etc., to Danvers, and the question has been asked me square, whether I w'd be Supt. Although I said no more in reply than that I would *not* say no, I have since decided not to take it, and very largely because ——, who knows me for generations back, has convinced me that I am in many respects unsuited for that kind of work."

In the autumn of 1873 he went abroad for the sake of "seeing what asylums are there, etc." He was away about a year, studying mainly in Vienna and Berlin, but visiting also the hospitals of England and of Scotland and making valuable acquaintances. The full letters from Europe during this period (1873–1874), both to the various members of his family and to Mr. Gannett, show sound observation and an active mind. He found the English asylums the best, though by no means above criticism. The brutal manners of the Viennese doctors towards the poorer patients disgusted him, but did not prevent him from appreciating the splendid opportunities of these physicians for study nor their quality as teachers. Man for man he liked his own countrymen the best.

While he was still away an event occurred which proved to be for him of great significance. This was his selection for the secretaryship of the Massachusetts State Board of Health, just then thrown open by the regretted death of Dr. George Derby, a position in which an able physician could do more for the health of his fellow-citizens than in any other way whatever. The State Board of Health had then been in existence just four years. It had owed its life to the imagination and splendid zeal of Dr. Bowditch, and its remarkable development and career of usefulness at once to his labors and those of his public-spirited and able colleagues, and to the energy and spirit of Dr. Derby, fresh from service as army surgeon in the war and full of interest in matters relating to the public health. The Board as a whole was one of the best that ever served the State. Dr. Bowditch had been chairman from the first, and when the question came up of the appointment of a successor to Dr. Derby it was natural that his thoughts should turn to Dr. Folsom, young, free, of approved character and ability, and possessed already of experience in administrative work.[6] Dr. Derby died in June, 1874, and Dr. Folsom was appointed

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[6] Dr. Bowditch's personal friendship for Dr. Folsom is testified to by the following note, evidently written at a period when observers had had a chance to realize the quality of the new secretary. Friends of Dr. Bowditch will be

on September 12 of the same year, the gap of four months having been filled by Dr. F. W. Draper. The members of the Board at this time, besides Dr. Bowditch, were J. C. Hoadley, C.E., David L. Webster, Richard Frothingham, Robert T. Davis, M.D., and T. B. Newhall. These same members served until 1879, when the departments of health, lunacy and charity were combined and Dr. Folsom was chosen secretary of the united Board.

Dr. Folsom believed that in accepting the appointment as secretary of the State Board of Health he was shaping his life-work, and in the letter to Mr. Gannett, above cited, he continues: "Of course, you can never appreciate the disappointment it cost me to give up the practice of medicine. It seemed like having in my palm something for which I had bent every energy for a dozen years, and then calmly throwing it away, and the silly *hankering* took shape in Danvers as the only practicable form; but that is now gone, like all my other buried hopes at which I can now smile and joke."

The occupations of the conscientious secretary of such a board as this, certainly of this board, are but faintly indicated in his title. His duties cannot all be specified in detail and he does much that passes unrecorded. Besides his labors as recording and executive officer, nothing goes on that does not pass his judgment, feel his touch, receive his contribution. He is the nucleus of the busy cell. The reports are in great part his work, and it is a striking tribute to Dr. Folsom's industry and ability that the volume which was issued on the first of January, 1875, only three months after his appointment, was not only ready at the proper time, but contained a long article by him, implying careful study, upon the meat supply of our cities, with suggestions for its improvement. One of the most important among the numerous and manifold secretary's jobs, and a task that called for good feeling, tact, and judgment of a high order, as well as for firmness and intelligence, was that of going about as inspector, critic, and adviser among the various towns and villages of the State, in the interests of sanitary re-

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reminded by it of the generous warmth which he threw alike into his friendships and his public work.

"BOSTON, June 25.

"MY DEAR DR., — I send by mail the Advertiser of to-day. I felt my heart almost jump as I read the fine compliment paid to you my dear Dr. in the editorial. I certainly echo the wish that you may long continue to occupy the position in which you are growing, not only in yourself, but in the estimation and love of the community. God be praised that you dropped a letter to me from Europe "just in the nick of time." . . .

"Faithfully yours,

"H. I. B."

form. It was after one of these trips, in November, 1877, that the North Adams Transcript published a long editorial, impressive with figures and with facts, the opening paragraphs of which here follow.

"As stated in a previous issue, Dr. Charles F. Folsom, Secretary of the State Board of Health, recently visited our village for the purpose of making a thorough investigation into its sanitary condition. For the limited time which he spent here, his work was been remarkably thorough, and the results of his examination, which we publish in full, are of a nature calculated to startle our citizens and awaken a profound interest in an important and heretofore neglected subject."

The investigations with which Dr. Folsom became especially identified (besides the question of meat-supply, above referred to) in the five years that followed his appointment, related to water-supply and the disposal of sewage, vital statistics, and his old love, — diseases of the mind. On these vast problems he made himself an expert, so far as this could be done without actual laboratory work. For this he was not trained, but what he did and what his mental constitution admirably fitted him to do was to scrutinize and estimate and contrast and afterward to summarize the work of other men, in Europe and at home, and then intelligently to form a plan suited for Massachusetts and for Boston. One reason why the work of the State Board at the period of Dr. Folsom's service was so largely given up to questions of water-supply and drainage and the disposal of sewage was that these subjects had begun to attract the public interest in a high degree. This led to legislation by the State authorities and permission to employ experts, the results of whose investigations are given in the successive annual reports. In these inquiries the City of Boston took an active part, and the problem of its sewerage was studied in 1875–1876 by a special commission, consisting of E. S. Cheesborough and Moses Lane as representing the department of civil engineering, and Dr. Folsom as standing for the interests of the public health. This commission was appointed by the city government in February, 1875, only a few months after the nomination of Dr. Folsom to the position of Secretary to the State Board of Health, and the choice of him as a member may therefore be considered as a recognition of his merits. The commission was called on to consider, one by one, a series of important practical problems relating to the sewerage system of the city and the modes by which it could be bettered. One portion of the investigation consisted in a study of the methods of dealing with the sewage-waste adopted in other cities of America and Europe and the experiments in utilizing it through irrigation-farms. The investigation of these matters necessitated another trip to Europe on Dr. Folsom's part (in 1875), during which the

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material was collected which was published as an appendix to the report of the commission. The plan recommended in this report was, as is well known, the building of the great system of the Metropolitan intercepting-sewer for that portion of the city lying on the south side of the Charles River, with pumping stations at Moon Island, discharging on ebb-tide into the bay. Dr. Folsom afterwards appeared before the Joint Committee on Improved Sewerage and presented an elaborate defence and explanation of this plan, contrasting it with that offered by the Superintendent of Sewers, which he admitted to be cheaper but believed to represent a false economy. The plan advised by the commission was finally adopted, and was carried out, and has proved, in many ways, remarkably successful. The same principle was applied later to the north side. The preliminary investigation had been thorough, the reasoning based on it was convincing, and the conclusions were conservative and sound. Besides contributing to the able and impressive reports made by this commission and by the State Board of Health, with all their many maps and tables, Dr. Folsom read a paper before the American Statistical Association, in April, 1877, in which the sewage-farm question in particular was discussed, on the basis of a remarkable amount of knowledge and of judgment. Other communications on this and kindred subjects had appeared in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal in the form of letters written during his trip abroad.

As soon as the work of the board with reference to water-supply and drainage began to relax, Dr. Folsom turned his attention again to the duties of the State with relation to insanity and to the general question of the treatment of the insane. In 1877 he published the long article on this subject entitled Diseases of the Mind, which was republished in book form. This excellent monograph reviews the history of the treatment of insane patients from the earliest times, and describes with accuracy what was being done and what was being planned in all the great institutions of Europe and America. It tells a striking and highly interesting story. The materials for this work had been collected partly during his visit to Europe in 1875, when he had industriously visited asylums and formed the acquaintance of several prominent alienists, especially in England. With him acquaintance was more than apt to ripen into friendship, and such was the case as regards his relationship to Dr. T. S. Clouston of Edinburgh, perhaps the leading alienist of Great Britain at that day, and a man of warm and fine personal qualities which attracted Dr. Folsom strongly. The friendship between them was strengthened by subsequent visits to Edinburgh on Dr. Folsom's part and a visit by Dr. Clouston to America. Several of

Dr. Folsom's patients spent some time at the pleasant institution of Morningside, under Dr. Clouston's care.

It was within a year after the publication of this paper that Dr. Folsom was offered and declined the superintendency of Danvers Hospital, as above described.

The work of the State Board of Health, extensive as it was, did not prevent him, at this period, from giving a certain amount of time to private practice, especially among the insane, nor from lecturing at the Harvard Medical School. His connection with this school began in 1877 and continued until 1888. He served first as lecturer on hygiene, then gave instruction in both hygiene and mental diseases, and finally became assistant professor of Mental Diseases. His resignation was prompted partly by the lack of proper clinical facilities for teaching, partly by the fact that he had finally decided to withdraw from the exclusive study of diseases of the mind and to devote himself to the work of a general practitioner and consultant. But this is to anticipate, as we still have several interesting years of public work to chronicle.

I have sketched the principal features of his labors as secretary of the State Board of Health as far as 1879. In that year two events of importance for him occurred, namely, the appointment of the Yellow Fever Commission, of which he was made a member, and the submerging of the Board of Health in the combined Board of Health, Lunacy, and Charity, of which he was appointed secretary and of which he was made a member in the following year.

The yellow fever epidemic of 1879–1880 ravaged several of the Southern States, especially those bordering on the Mississippi River, and the National Advisory Commission was appointed to inspect the infected districts and consult with local authorities and officers of public health. As a member of this commission Dr. Folsom visited a number of Southern cities, especially Memphis and New Orleans, and left behind him a pleasant impression of tact, judgment, and good breeding, of which Dr. H. P. Walcott, Dr. Folsom's successor on the Board of Health, still found traces on the occasion of a visit, many years later, to the same localities. The most important result of the trip for Dr. Folsom himself was, however, that it brought him into close contact with Dr. John S. Billings, and laid the basis for one of those enduring friendships in which he was so rich.[7] This same outbreak of yellow fever

[7] In a recent letter Dr. Billings writes: "From my first acquaintance with him I had the greatest respect for his judgment, and the frank honesty of the way he gave it, and as we became intimately associated the friendship grew into a warm affection which continued to the end. He was a model

formed the occasion for the establishment of the National Board of Health, and of this Dr. Billings and Dr. H. I. Bowditch were appointed members. There were thus several ties that bound Dr. Folsom's interest to the work of this important Board, and it was only natural that on Dr. Bowditch's retirement, in 1882, Dr. Folsom should be chosen his successor. The work of the Board by that time, to be sure, was already waning under the inanition treatment to which it was subjected by the government at Washington, and in the few remaining years of its life it did but little active work. Nevertheless, it served to cement still closer the bond of friendship between Dr. Folsom and Dr. Billings, and also brought the former into wider notice among public men.

The absorption of the Board of Health into the combined Board of Health, Lunacy and Charity, was a matter of profound regret to Dr. Folsom as to Dr. Bowditch, and to all their colleagues. They felt that the co-operative effectiveness of the small group of men who had learned to work so well together was likely to be impaired, and with no compensating benefit. Dr. Bowditch who was appointed on the new Board, but resigned almost at once, partly to gain more time for other labors, partly as a means of expressing his disapproval. Dr. Folsom was made secretary of the new Board, at first with special duties relative to the health department, but resigned in January, 1881, just a year after Dr. Bowditch. He had identified himself with many of the important measures that were adopted by the Board during his brief term of service, and lent his aid to carry into effect a scheme which then, perhaps, seemed to most onlookers to be of much less consequence than it later proved. This was the appointment by the State Board of carefully selected women, from the different towns throughout the State, to act as "Auxiliary Visitors" to the State Board of Health, Lunacy, and Charity, in looking after the girls from the State Primary School at Monson, and the State Industrial School at Lancaster, as well as those committed to the custody of the board itself and placed out with relatives or in other families, while still remaining wards of the State. The appointment of these visitors increased very materially the value of the Board's work in that direction. Similar work had been going on for some years, on a small scale, as an informal outgrowth of the efforts of a few women who had been assisting Colonel Gardiner Tufts, Superintendent of the State Visiting Agency, but it was of great

citizen, giving time and skilled labor to public interests without a thought of personal benefit — a skilled physician, beloved by his patients, and a gentleman in all the best senses of that word. I am proud of the fact that he was my friend."

importance to have the system adopted by the State Board, its value recognized, and its work established on a larger scale.

Besides serving on the State Board Dr. Folsom gave much time during the early eighties to the Danvers Lunatic Hospital, in the establishment of which he had been greatly interested and of which he had been made trustee. In 1881 he read an excellent paper entitled "The Management of the Insane," before the Hospital Trustees Association, discussing and forecasting the conditions needed to make a hospital fulfil its possibilities of efficiency. As usual, practical good sense, thorough information and earnest desire for reform inspire its pages, on one of which he refers to his studies made during five visits in different years to Great Britain. Another paper, on "The Relation of the State to the Insane," was read at the American Medical Association this same year.

In the following year, 1882, occurred the trial of Guiteau for the assassination of President Garfield, followed by his condemnation and execution, notwithstanding the protest of a large number of the best physicians of the country. Dr. Folsom took part in the public discussion of the merits of this case, and in so doing revived an interest in medical jurisprudence which had expressed itself, even in 1875, in a paper entitled "Limited Responsibility: a Discussion of the Pomeroy Case," in 1877 by an article on "Medical Jurisprudence in New York," and in 1880 by an account of "Cases of Insanity and of Fanaticism," devoted mainly to the remarkably interesting case of Freeman, the religious fanatic of the quiet village of Pocasset on Cape Cod who had killed a favorite child under a supposed Divine command. The study of such borderland cases, involving questions of moral and of legal responsibility, continued, indeed, to interest him throughout his life, and it is well known to his friends that he analyzed with extreme care, through several years, the data in the noted case of Jane Toppan. Pomeroy and Jane Toppan he believed to be essentially criminals, Guiteau insane. Freeman he rightly judged a crank of the fanatic type, a product of his environment, and only technically insane. He kept close watch of Freeman from the beginning onward, was instrumental in securing his release on probation from the asylum in which he was confined, and rejoiced at the continued reports of his subsequent good behavior, which have continued to come in even to the present day.

In 1881 Dr. Folsom was appointed visiting physician to the City Hospital, and it was largely on his account that a ward was established there for the study and treatment of nervous diseases. Of this ward Dr. S. G. Webber and he were made physicians. Strictly speaking,

Please insert this slip on page 16 *of the Memoir of Dr. C. F. Folsom.*

The account here given of the establishment of the ward for nervous and renal diseases contains certain errors. The facts are that Dr. Folsom's appointment in 1881 was not as visiting physician, but to the out-patient service (see footnote to page 19), and that the ward here referred to was established in 1877, at the request of Dr. R. T. Edes, who had been for some years visiting physician to the hospital. Dr. Edes and Dr. S. G. Webber were appointed (in 1878) as physicians to the new ward. In 1882 Dr. James H. Denny was appointed as additional physician, but resigned after a short service. Dr. Webber resigned his service in 1885, and Dr. Edes in the following year, 1886. Dr. Folsom was appointed in September, 1885, to succeed Dr. Webber. By that time it had become customary to admit a larger number of general medical cases to this service than at first; and in 1886 it was proposed to change the character of the service altogether, making it simply a third medical service. This proposition was referred to a committee of which Dr. Folsom was a member, and was adopted on December 22, 1886.

was a congenial one to him and was always well performed.

In the next year (1887) he took part in the discussion of another topic of public interest, namely, whether the State should establish a hospital for dipsomaniacs. To this plan he was opposed.

This is perhaps the proper place to mention that Dr. Folsom had been warmly interested for many years in the question of the proper treatment of prostitution. He studied this subject diligently, at home and abroad, and wrote his views upon it at length to Mr. Gannett. Unfortunately he did not publish them, and it would perhaps be unjust to consider them as final. They are, however, of interest as an example of his habitual generosity of sentiment. Like the majority of cultivated men, and especially those who have labored practically in the harness of organized progress, Dr. Folsom was conservative and inclined to see two sides to every proposition. On the other hand, he was by inheritance and by temperament a reformer, a hater of injustice, of oppression, and of immorality. These sometimes conflicting tendencies were all drawn upon in his studies into the question of prostitution. Whatever is to be said of the varied influences and motives

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8 Given before the teachers in the public schools, under the auspices of the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association.

at work, the observation of those who fall, he writes, "increases one's admiration for those many persons in all stations of life who lead lives of purity and nobleness, and to whom trial and temptation only give added purity and strength. If people will only place their ideals high enough, they easily or with a fight may make them real. —— does not believe this, but I know it."

In the spring of 1886 Dr. Folsom was married to Martha Tucker Washburn, sister of his classmate William T. Washburn, and this fortunate event filled with happiness and serenity the whole remainder of his life. Domestic, affectionate, home-loving, and hospitable, his marriage brought to him as much fulness of satisfaction as any of his friends could have desired. It gave new scope, too, to his hospitality and his strong social instincts, for these traits were eminently characteristic of his wife also, and their table became well known as one where good talk, good fellowship, and good humor in the best sense were to be found. Dr. Folsom had had a wide experience with men, with books, and with affairs; he had a good memory, a good sense of humor, a fondness for a good story and the capacity to tell one, and these characteristics, combined with his real love for his fellow-men, made him a highly acceptable companion.

For a number of years he had been very busy in his private practice and his marriage only increased his zeal in this respect and his opportunities for conducting his work as he desired. To an unusual degree he treated his patients as his friends and made them welcome visitors at his house. This tendency, which was instinctive with him and formed a part of his desire to lead a life which should bring him into close contact "with individuals needing help," was thoroughly sympathized in and actively forwarded by his wife, and materially increased his power for good.

As a diagnostician and practitioner Dr. Folsom was a careful, accurate observer, sound and conservative in judgment and resourceful in meeting practical needs, and it was these qualities rather than an ability and instinct for scientific investigation that brought him his success. His contributions to what might be called pure science were in fact not numerous, and became less so as time went on. It was always the vision of "the individuals needing help" that led him on. The worrying habit might readily have developed itself in him, but he systematically discouraged this tendency and opposed to it a simple and gentle philosophy of living which methodical, well-ordered habits aided to make effective. Generosity was a constant trait throughout his life and for nearly twenty years he contributed substantially to the support of a brother who was ill, and even to the very last to

the education of nieces and nephews. That it was a joy to him to do this, as it had been to contribute to the comfort of his parents' declining years, is shown by the following extract from a letter written in 1901: "Just now I am sending two nieces to school and a nephew to college, and hiring an outside man for my brother, who is ill. Many of the other things I do not care for, it is such a pleasure and such a privilege to do these." His sister writes: "What he was to us all as counsellor could n't well be told — it includes a much wider family circle of cousins and broadens into the same service for patients and friends."

Dr. Folsom's public services did not cease with his resignation from the State Board. In 1891 he was chosen overseer of Harvard College, and to this important post he was repeatedly re-elected, until he had served twelve years. In the spring of 1896 he was one of the commission appointed by the Governor and Council "to investigate the public charitable and reformatory interests and institutions of the Commonwealth; to inquire into the expediency of revising the system of administering the same, and of revising all existing laws in regard to pauperism and insanity, including all laws relating to pauper settlements," etc. The other members of this commission were Mr. William F. Wharton and Professor Davis R. Dewey. Their report, covering a hundred printed pages, was submitted in February, 1897. In 1901 he was offered — so his letters show — the chairmanship of the State Board of Lunacy, but decided to decline this tempting offer. "Think," he writes, "of following in Dr. Howe's footsteps with twice as big a field." In 1903 he was selected as president of the Harvard Medical School Alumni Association. Truly, a rare list of honors and opportunities for service.

As early as 1898 Dr. Folsom resigned his position as visiting physician to the Boston City Hospital,[9] "long before his usefulness to the institution began to wane," a colleague writes,[10] and although he was chosen consulting physician in 1901, this appointment was one rather of honor than of active service. The fact was, as many of his friends observed, that Dr. Folsom's policy for several years before his last

[9] The whole period of Dr. Folsom's active work in connection with the City Hospital, not including his service as assistant, was from December, 1881, to the time of his resignation in 1898. He was first appointed Physician to Out-Patients (December, 1881), then Physician to Out-Patients with Diseases of the Nervous System (November, 1882), then Visiting Physician to Patients with Diseases of the Nervous System (September, 1885), and finally member of the general visiting staff (December, 1886). After his resignation in 1898, he was appointed Consulting Physician in 1901.

[10] Editorial, Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, August 29, 1907.

visit to Europe had been to withdraw from unnecessary labors, not on account of obvious ill health, and surely not from indolence, but from prudence. In 1899 his horse fell with him, and this accident cost him a broken rib and an attack of pleurisy, and marks the period subsequent to which his strength and power of work were never quite what they had been before. In 1901 he writes to Mr. Gannett: "I am sorry that I do not write to —— oftener and to you and to —— and that I do not do a lot of extra things in the way of work of all kinds and of social duties and pleasures. But I discovered some time ago that there was not enough of me to go around. Starting in debt and having something to do for others all the time, one has to be economical of his strength if he is going to practise medicine."

Many men would have met this need of economy of strength by longer and more frequent holidays than he took. But, fond as he was of the country, of travel, of new friends, his habit of long years had been to husband his strength by careful living, and not to separate himself far or for long from his patients and his desk. Perhaps he knew himself better than his advisers knew him when he chose this mode of life, or accepted it as a satisfactory one when it seemed forced upon him by his duties. His recreation lay in friendly intercourse, in horseback riding, and, of late years, in absences of short duration at Little Boar's Head, New Hampshire, where he and his wife, with several friends, spent a number of consecutive summers. The final visit to Europe, which at best was to have been of but two months duration, was looked forward to by both his wife and himself with the greater pleasure for the fact that it had been so long postponed. He was pretty well tired before starting, but in essential ways had seemed as well and as serene as common. Perhaps, in fact, he felt less well than he admitted. At any rate, even on the passage outward he seemed poorly, and when in England a constant though slight fever set in and he was unable to obtain the expected pleasure from the visits and excursions that he made. While in London he consulted physicians, among them Sir Lauder Brunton and Sir Almroth Wright, but without avail. During the voyage homeward his fever increased to a high point and he became delirious. On arriving in New York he was taken to the Roosevelt Hospital and carefully tended by Dr. Walter B. James. Here he lay for several weeks, at times improving slightly, at times worse again, but on the whole gradually losing ground. Much of the time his mind wandered a little, but it was striking to note how fully he retained his characteristic patience and his unmurmuring readiness to accept results, whatever they might be. Perhaps he felt sure from the first that he should not get well, and

certainly he once said that he knew he was approaching his end and that "the clock had struck twelve;" but this may be taken rather as a temperamental note of acquiescence than as a conclusion based on evidence. He died at last quietly and without pain.

The examination showed that he had been suffering from an ulcerative, infective endocarditis, with embolisms, to which it was thought his old valvular heart-disease had rendered him susceptible.

It would be easy to multiply testimonials to the character and ability of Dr. Folsom from the words — spoken, written, or printed — of his colleagues and his friends. Perhaps, however, the most fitting close to this brief sketch is given in the final paragraphs of a private letter from Mr. Gannett, who was the oldest and probably the closest of Dr. Folsom's friends. After referring to the fact that at each new meeting following a long interval of separation he found him always "hard at work, the same loyal friend, simple, modest, gentle, high-minded, lovable . . . yet growing in power and in service, . . ." Mr. Gannett goes on to say, "It is strange how well one can know a man's self while knowing so little of his works and days. The reason, no doubt, lies in the same loyalty, — he was loyal to himself; through his growth and success he remained the same man I knew in our youth. I was always grateful for his holding on to me, and counted it an honor. And it seems so easy to hold on to *him* now for the same reason, — now when his greeting no longer waits me in Boston. I happened yesterday to be looking up something about George William Curtis, and came across what Mr. Roosevelt — not yet even Governor — said of him at some club in New York City, not long after his death. He spoke of the serene purity and goodness of character which impressed every one who came in contact with Curtis, — and then said, 'I have used the adjective *serene*, it is a beautiful adjective, and it is the only adjective I know of which is sufficiently beautiful to describe his beautiful character.' I think of Folsom in that way, — the adjective and the noun, and the whole expression apply well to him."

A testimonial of another form deserves especial mention. A large number, nearly seventy, of his friends and patients, "who wished in this way to express their grateful appreciation of Dr. Folsom's unfailing care and skill as a physician, and their admiration for him as a man" (Harvard Bulletin, March 4, 1908), presented Harvard University with a fund of ten thousand dollars for the establishment in the Harvard Medical School of "The Charles Follen Folsom Teaching Fellowship," in Hygiene or in Mental and Nervous Diseases. The issue of the Bulletin in which this gift was announced contains also an

editorial upon Dr. Folsom which concludes as follows: "But it was not as an authority on public health and on mental and nervous diseases or as a College officer that his former patients and colleagues have sought to perpetuate his name in an institution which he loved so well. It was as a friend, perhaps as a host to whom entertaining was a fine art, that they knew him. Wise, firm, kind, and indefatigable, he rarely departed from a sick-room without leaving his patient stronger in mind, if not in body. His constant thoughtfulness of his charges, in health as in illness, was unending, and many a patient owes a sound mind and a sound body to Charles Folsom's sagacity, skill, and loving care. Indeed, it may be said of him more truly than of many physicians and of most men that he was like "rivers of water in a dry place and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

JAMES J. PUTNAM.

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MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY.
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SUFFOLK DISTRICT MEDICAL SOCIETY.
SOCIETY OF PSYCHIATRY AND NEUROLOGY.
BOSTON SOCIETY OF MEDICAL IMPROVEMENT.
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES.
AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION.
AMERICAN SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION.
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.
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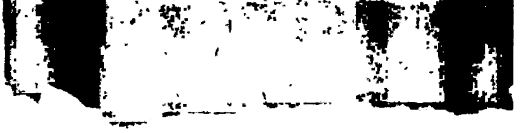

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